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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, MAY 17, 2007

In Today's Papers

Turkish Parties Prepare for Elections

All papers report Prime Minister Erdogan told the ruling AKP group meeting Wednesday the presidential election process demonstrated that the opposition CHP "failed the democracy test," adding those who obstructed the parliament's presidential vote would get their answer from the nation in the elections. Erdogan said in Turkey, those who define themselves as social democrats do not fit this definition, and that this has been voiced by the social democratic leaders of other countries.

Opposition parties CHP and DSP leaders Deniz Baykal and Zeki Sezer will reportedly announce their decision regarding a possible election alliance in a couple of days. Talks are blocked due to a disagreement over the number of seats to be given to DSP, which wants at least 20 whereas CHP offers not more than 12 seats in the parliament, according to papers.

Papers speculate that the AKP will nominate retired generals, academics, and some prominent names from all walks of life in an effort to convince mainstream circles that the ruling party has no problems with the military and establishment. Papers also claim the AKP was planning to nominate some non-Muslim Turkish candidates in the upcoming elections.

Baser Calls for Turkey-US Action against the PKK in Iraq

Hurriyet, Radikal and several television channels report retired general Edip Baser, Turkey's special envoy for countering terrorism, said at a conference Wednesday that Turkey, if possible in cooperation with the US, should do whatever is necessary in Iraq. "Joint action is not a prerequisite for intervention in northern Iraq. Turkey may solve the problem alone, but this may pave the way for future complications," said Baser. Baser noted a total removal of the PKK presence in north of Iraq might happen at a future stage.

Baser also warned that using religion as a means of politics poses a threat against national unity and domestic peace.

Plane Crash Victims Had Been Under Surveillance

All papers report Michael Newman and Zakauallah Bhangoo, British and Pakistani nationals killed in a plane crash in mountainous terrain in Trabzon in northeast Turkey earlier this week, had been under Osman Gunes said. Their bodies were found on Tuesday. Papers speculate that the two men were taking nuclear secrets from Pakistan to Iran. The plane landed in Trabzon on May 10 for refueling but had to wait until May 13 because of adverse weather conditions, before leaving for Tabriz on Sunday. Bhangoo had 90 incoming foreign telephone calls during his two days in Trabzon, say papers.

Supreme Court of Appeals Overturns Semdinli Verdict

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Zaman and others: The Supreme Court of Appeals annulled a verdict on two non-commissioned officers Ali Kaya and Ozcan Ildeniz in the controversial Semdinli case where the military personnel were accused of planning a bomb attack on a book shop owned by a Kurdish activist, on the grounds that the investigation into the incidents in Semdinli town of the southeastern city of Hakkari was incomplete. The court overruled 39 year prison sentences for Ali Kaya and Ozcan Ildeniz and ruled that the case should be brought before a military court.

Bathing Suit Ads Banned Once Again by Istanbul Municipality

Cumhuriyet, Vatan, Radikal, Milliyet and others: Leading swimsuit producers in Istanbul criticized the municipality for restricting advertisements of their products. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports that the censorship started in 2003 when Istanbul Municipality covered up an ad at Istanbul airport featuring a top model in a 'Zeki Triko' bikini. Bathing suit companies harshly criticize the municipality for the censorship, asking "are we living in Iran, the country of Mullahs, or Turkey?" Istanbul Municipality

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officials told press that there is no ban on ads, but added that there are certain criteria in the decision-making process such as compatibility with general moral values.

Editorial Commentary on New French President Sarkozy

Erdal Safak writes in the mainstream daily Sabah: "Sarkozy has some very different views on certain policy issues. First, he enjoys being labeled 'Sarko the American.' Regarding the Middle East he gives priority to establishing strategic partnership with Israel - he has never visited Palestine during his trips to Middle East so far. As for the immigration issue, he pursues zero tolerance for illegal immigrants. Since Sarkozy maintains a strong anti-Turkey attitude regarding the EU membership process, the only hope may be coming from his potential Foreign Minister candidate Kouchner. Yet we should not be very optimistic about Kouchner since Sarkozy already said that he is the boss of foreign policy. Something is very obvious: We will dearly miss Jacques Chirac."

Ali Sirmen writes in the leftist-nationalist daily Cumhuriyet:

"When it comes to making a choice between the EU's biased attitude toward Turkey, and Sarkozy's candor, the latter is much better for us than the former. He at least dares to say that Turkey should not be fooled any longer. The EU does not want Turkey in it, but nobody is honest enough to say it. Sarkozy is the only exception. We should not get upset with his attitude, instead we should thank him for telling the truth."

TV Highlights

NTV, 6.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- Emre Gunaydin, a key suspect, has admitted he planned the murder of three Bible publishers in the eastern city of Malatya last month.

- The prosecutor has demanded a five-year prison sentence for former Kurdish MP Leyla Zana for referring to Talabani, Barzani, and the PKK's imprisoned leader Abdullah Ocalan as "the three leaders of Kurdish people" in a speech during Nevruz celebrations in March.

- The members of the Turkish anti-nuclear platform have called on President Sezer to veto the bill for the construction of a nuclear power plant in the Black Sea province of Sinop.
- The ruling AKP government held Wednesday the first round of collective bargaining talks with labor unions.

International News

- In a speech at the European Parliament, Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat said southern Cyprus manipulates the EU to extend the isolation of Turkish Cyprus.
- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said President Ahmadinejad's offer to Arab neighbors to send a team to inspect Iran's nuclear work "is not going to fly."
- French President Nicolas Sarkozy arrived in Berlin on Wednesday for talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in his first visit abroad as president.
- Gordon Brown was formally confirmed Wednesday as the next leader of the Labor Party and as Tony Blair's successor as prime minister.

WILSON